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S E C R E T MUSCAT 000952

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, PRM, AF/E

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SUBJECT: MILITARY'S ANTI-INFILTRATOR OPS END IN SOUTH

REF: MUSCAT 792 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., William R. Stewart.
Reason: 1.4 (a, b, d).

1. (S) According to senior military officials in the Royal Oman Army and Sultan's Special Force, military operations in Oman's southern Dhofar region to sweep up illegal Somali and other infiltrators have ceased as of early June. When they began in late April, the operations were primarily focused on Somali migrants, thought to have come from refugee camps in Yemen, who were increasingly accused of theft and sometimes violent crime. Military contacts said it soon became apparent that there were a large number of undocumented foreigners of various nationalities, which led to the expansion of operations.

2. (S) As a result of the intense security sweeps, Omani forces apprehended more than 1500 persons, of whom 281 were Somali. The bulk of the remainder are South Asians, many of whom initially came to Oman on work visas but then overstayed or fell out of status. The only weapons seized from detainees were Kalashnikovs. The Foreign Ministry briefed selected members of the diplomatic community recently (but not the U.S., however) and cited similar statistics, according to diplomatic contacts. Both military and diplomatic sources allude to Oman's difficulty in expelling the Somali detainees given the situation in their homeland.

3. (S) Military contacts note that the end of operations in Dhofar marks only "Phase 1" of the program. Phase 2, focused on the sparsely populated Wusta region along Oman's central southern coast, is set to begin in July.

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